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NOTES AND QUERIES.

INDIAN SUMMER. — The history of the term "Indian Summer" is a subject in which all Americans ought to be more or less interested, since it is one of the expressions which the English settlers of the New World have added to our language. Professor Cleveland Abbe, of the United States Department of Agriculture (Weather Bureau), has set on foot an investigation into the origin and signification of the term, and Mr. Albert Matthews, of 145 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass., has been asked to put together all that can be discovered concerning its etymology and history. The word has been traced in printed books as far back as 1794, and the readers of this Journal, who come across earlier references either in books or unpublished manuscripts, are invited to help in the matter. Communications on the subject, containing new evidence, important data as to local use, etc., may be sent to the editor of the Journal, or direct to Mr. Matthews.

SPIDER INVASION. — In his charming volume, "The Naturalist in La Plata" (3d edition, London, 1895), Mr. W. H. Hudson has the following passage (p. 193): "The gauchos have a very quaint ballad which tells that the city of Cordova was once invaded by an army of monstrous spiders, and that the townspeople went out with beating drums and flags flying to repel the invasion, and that after firing several volleys they were forced to turn and fly for their lives. I have no doubt that a sudden great increase of the man-chasing spiders, in a year exceptionally favorable to them, suggested this fable to some rhyming satirist of the town." But perhaps we have here a variant of the widespread tale of animal-invasion of which the "Pied Piper of Hamelin" and "Bishop Hatto" are examples.

SACRED TREES. — During the last three or four years several special articles dealing with the rôle of certain trees and shrubs in mythology and folk-belief have appeared in the journals devoted to Folk-Lore, Anthropology, and kindred subjects. Brief references to some of them may be in place here.

1. *Birch*. The birch is dealt with in an article, "Der Birkenbesen, ein Symbol des Donar," in the "Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie" (vol. xiii. pp. 81-97, 125-162). In this essay Friedrich Kunze discusses somewhat exhaustively the relation of the birch-tree, the birch-twigg, and the birch-broom to the thunder-god (Donar). The birch-broom itself, so commonly deemed a talisman or remedy against many kinds of evil spirits (especially those inimical to the house, the home, the person, the field, etc.), is said to derive its virtue from the fact that it is really "a bundle of rods from the tree sacred to the great thunder-god." The birch-rod was esteemed a powerful defence against demons, local spirits in particular. The birch in folk-thought and folk-custom has marked associations with the spring, Easter, May, St. John's Day, etc., and is even more closely connected in some respects with agriculture, the harvest, and the weather